

EDUCATIONAL COMPUTING PROFILE

A monthly magazine series profiling electronic products, ideas and activities.



Produced by
Kentucky Educational Television
and Educational Products Information Exchange Institute
and funded in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

ON PUBLIC TV

COMMENTARY



Ken Komoski, founder and executive director of Educational Products Information Exchange (EPIE) Institute, is host and executive producer for the PBS series, "Educational Computing Profile."

Welcome to a new year of "Educational Computing Profile" reports. For 30 minutes each month the staff of EPIE Institute and special guests will continue to help educators and parents keep abreast of the products and issues that make learning with computers one of the most promising, and at times one of the most controversial, developments in education today.

As before, the series will use a magazine format divided into three segments: Trends and News reported by Lydia Copeland; Software and Hardware Evaluations presented by Ellen Bialo and Lou Roberts of the EPIE staff; and Interviews and Commentary, featuring me and my special guests.

For the past 17 years EPIE has been helping educators and the public become critical consumers and make wise choices among an ever-increasing array of instructional products. During this time we worked hard to make the issue of improving the quality of instructional materials and the process of decision-making about those materials into the major educational issue it deserves to be.

In the early years EPIE conducted research and wrote reports, funded by grants from the Lilly Endowment, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, concerning the quality of instructional materials being used by the schools. Then in 1982 EPIE joined forces with Consumers Union to produce comprehensive reviews of educational products, known as EPIE/CU Courseware and Hardware PRO/FILES.

Today we have trained over 300 evaluators in school districts and universities across the country to assist us. We broadcast "Educational Computing Profile" every month via the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and we are contracting with State Departments of Education around the country to purchase PRO/FILES so that their school districts have equal access to important product information. Most recently, we have negotiated with Compuserve, an electronic access service, to provide all of EPIE microcomputer information services to subscribers as of February, 1984.

Through all the developments and expansions EPIE's mission has never changed—to produce reliable, unbiased information on the quality of educational products and to make parents and educators critical consumers, capable of making the most informed, economical decisions possible regarding learning materials for their children.

We pledge to continue bringing you this kind of quality information in our five remaining programs this year. I hope you'll be watching.

CHARTING THE TRENDS



Lydia Copeland is anchor woman for the Trends/Headlines portion of "Educational Computing Profile." She is also co-host for a nightly television program on WHAS-TV, Louisville, KY.

The number of electronic learning products, activities and ideas in the educational marketplace is staggering and projected to increase tenfold. That's one of the reasons for a "Trends/Headlines" segment in each of our monthly television reports.

In the segment, we provide viewers with news updates of major activities in the industry; we identify companies which offer unique and worthwhile products and we keep viewers informed of the rapid changes in electronic learning.

With the help of researchers, we attempt to find and report the most up-to-date developments for our viewers.

In the coming months, we will continue to bring parents and school personnel important trends and developments that are having an impact on electronic learning. I hope you'll join us.

SELECTING SOFTWARE



Ellen Bialo, director of courseware evaluation at the Educational Products Information Exchange (EPIE) Institute, is software evaluator for "Educational Computing Profile."

Each month on "Educational Computing Profile" I take a critical look at different kinds of software and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

While criteria for each category vary somewhat, there are general guidelines to consider when purchasing or using software.

Before purchasing software for school or home use, ask yourself these questions:

- * Is the purpose of the software clearly stated and attainable?
- * Is there any prior knowledge or prerequisite skill necessary to complete this program?
- * Are directions clear and supported by examples and demonstrations on screen for young users, as well as in manuals?
- * Does the program motivate the learner and maintain his or her interest by using graphics and audio?

- * Is there appropriate feedback that aids the user in obtaining the right answer without automatically supplying it? Does the program direct the user to the appropriate level of practice?
- * Does the software provide or suggest ways to record user performance so that learning can be evaluated?
- * Does the program provide enough problems, questions or levels to ensure reusability?

BUYING A COMPUTER



Lou Roberts, director of technical evaluations at the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute, is the hardware evaluator for "Educational Computing Profile."

When shopping for a computer system, don't be seduced by slick features, catchy advertisements or aggressive sales personnel. Do read all you can about hardware and software, compare notes with friends and colleagues and, of course, watch "Educational Computing Profile" every month.

Armed with those caveats, let's go over some points to remember.

1. Define your needs—major, minor and future needs. Then match this list with the capabilities of the computer you are considering. You may find that a less expensive machine can serve you best.
2. Determine your budget. Consider not only the main computer unit, but add-ons, such as printers, monitors and software you'll be using, which can double or triple your costs.
3. Unless you plan to use a computer solely for programming, make a careful check on the availability of software. Read software articles and reviews, such as EPIE Microcomputer PRO/FILES. Ask your vendor to demonstrate software you plan to purchase. Ask colleagues and other professionals to recommend good programs.
4. Decide on the amount of memory you require. If you plan to use prepackaged software, check to see how much memory you will need. If you use the computer to teach programming, the more complex the program, the more memory you require.

There are many uses at home and in school for a microcomputer—in instruction, in management and administration, as a tool for processing, storing and retrieving data and in the areas of research and telecommunications. By carefully considering your needs and resources *first* and by doing some comparative shopping, you will avoid costly mistakes and equipment destined to become dust collectors.

HIGHLIGHTS

The following are descriptions of the first five editions of "Educational Computing Profile." Each program is 30 minutes in length.

Vol. I, No. 1 Ken Komoski hosts "Educational Computing Profile," a monthly series updating parents and educators on the quality of electronic products, services and activities. The September edition features Irwin Landau, editor of *Consumer Reports*, and Rowan Wakefield, editor of "American Family" Newsletter, in a discussion of computer literacy. Lou Roberts, EPIE's technical director, compares three popular computers with similar capabilities, but vastly different prices, and Ellen Bialo, EPIE's courseware evaluator, evaluates two courseware packages designed to develop vocabulary skills. A segment on current trends in electronic learning also is included.

Vol. I, No. 2 The October edition of "Educational Computing Profile" features Dr. Henry Jay Becker, project director at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University; Dr. Inabeth Miller, director of the Gutman Library at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Bill Mattingly, regional resource teacher for public schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky, in a discussion of planning for and using microcomputers in the classroom. Lou Roberts of EPIE compares the Apple IIe and Apple II Plus microcomputers, and software evaluator Ellen Bialo looks at several examples of drill and practice courseware. Lydia Copeland reports on new trends in electronic learning.

Vol. I, No. 3 Fred D'Ignazio, associate editor of *Compute!* magazine, contributing editor to *Enter!* magazine and TV commentator ("Good Morning America"), joins host Ken Komoski for the November edition of "Educational Computing Profile." D'Ignazio talks with parents about home computer activities they can share with their children; Lou Roberts looks at printers and Ellen Bialo explains what features to look for in logic and problem-solving courseware. Lydia Copeland reports on new trends in electronic learning.

Vol. I, No. 4 In the December edition of "Educational Computing Profile" Lou Roberts profiles two computers under \$200, the Commodore 64 and VIC-20, and Ellen Bialo discusses word processing software. Ken Komoski talks with Robert L. Eicholz of Houston Independent School District's "Computers Can" project and Assistant Superintendent Thomas Fowler-Finn of the Forest Hills, Ohio, school district. Lydia Copeland reports on trends in electronic learning.

Vol. I, No. 5 Regulars respond to viewer mail in the January edition of "Educational Computing Profile." Ellen Bialo discusses the process EPIE uses for software evaluations. Lou Roberts explains criteria for hardware evaluations. Guest Robert Haven, director of the EPIE Data Base on educational software, joins host Ken Komoski, Ellen and Lou for an overview of the software market. Lydia Copeland reports the trends and news.

STAY TUNED

Here are highlights of upcoming programs on "Educational Computing Profile":

- * How to develop a workable plan for microcomputer use in education
- * Where robotics fit into the educational marketplace
- * Ways to ensure more equal access to microcomputers in schools
- * Ideas for applying microcomputer products in special education

NATIONAL BROADCASTS

PBS in Washington will continue to feed "Educational Computing Profile" the second Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time

January edition

Tuesday, January 10, at 5:00 p.m. (ET)

February edition

Tuesday, February 14, at 5:00 p.m. (ET)

March edition

Tuesday, March 13, at 5:00 p.m. (ET)

April edition

Tuesday, April 10, at 5:00 p.m. (ET)

May edition

Tuesday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m. (ET)

There are unlimited taping rights for this series for educational use. Please consult your local public TV station to find out the dates and times it will be shown in your area.

FIND OUT MORE

For a free copy of MICROgram, EPIE newsletter for consumers of educational computing products, write:
EPIE/CONSUMERS UNION
MICROgram I
P.O. Box 839
Watermill, NY 11976

For further information about "Educational Computing Profile" write:

Mary Campbell
KET Promotion
600 Cooper Drive
Lexington, KY 40502
(606) 233-3000

or contact:
EPIE Institute
Teachers College
Columbia University
Box 27
New York, NY 10027

To obtain copies of individual programs or the entire series, send for an order form from:

Sid Webb
KET Marketing Services
Suite 213
2230 Richmond Road
Lexington, KY 40502
(606) 233-3000
Outside of Kentucky call toll-free 1-800-354-9067

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT "EDUCATIONAL COMPUTING PROFILE"

"I watched a recent program on Channel 21 (WLIW) which featured one of the members of your institute. I am interested in finding out what criteria you use in rendering software packages and also a list of the packages which you have rated including their ratings if possible. Thank you for your help."

Thomas E. McCrann
Vice President
Merrill Lynch
Securities Research Division
New York, NY

"On Monday evening, September 19th, I saw the first program in a new series on public television, Educational Computing Profile. I found the program very informative and relevant to some of our current activities at UMW."

Ronald L. Heilmann, Ph.D.
Director
The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee
School of Business Administration
Milwaukee, WI

"After viewing the first program of your series, we are very interested in obtaining more information concerning selection of computer software suitable for high schools. . . . Thank you very much for sparking our interest in such an expanding, but overwhelming, area as educational software."

Betsy Maaks
Media Care Specialist
University High School
Normal, IL

"I found the first program in your series on Educational Television to be interesting and encourage you to continue your efforts. As a Superintendent of a school district in the early stages of utilizing microcomputers in education, I am interested in the various points of view raised."

Roger M. Stiller, Superintendent
Columbiana Ex. Village School District
Columbiana, OH

"I have just viewed the Vol. 1, No. 1, September 1983 issue of Educational Computing Profile via PBS (Public Broadcasting Service). I am impressed by your visual counterpart of Consumer Reports and hope that you will indeed continue."

Patricia Winchell
San Bernardino, CA

"I have just viewed your first program in the series 'Educational Computing Profile.' It was truly wonderful. My husband and I, as parents of two preschoolers, have been seriously considering the very issues you addressed in your program."

Nancy G. Cunningham
Arlington, TX

"We enjoyed your program 'Educational Computing Profile'—we saw it on KAKM-TV in Anchorage."

Meg Hills
Palmer, AK

"Thank you for the excellent PBS television presentation. As a parent currently considering purchase of a computer, I found it most interesting and potentially helpful. I will be looking forward to further programs."

Richard E. Jackson
Wauwatosa, WI